



Bluffton Police Department

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Bluffton Police Officer Initiates a Mentoring Program for Elementary School Students
More than Half of the Department's Officers Now Mentoring Students

Officer Lauren Brown of the Bluffton Police Department debated ways to make a difference in the lives of elementary school students. Brown juggled ideas such as officers volunteering to read to a class or establishing a DARE (Drug Abuse and Resistance Education) program however; Brown said the best fit was designing a mentoring program which would give one-on-one attention to students.

Brown's idea started the Department's mentoring program which now involves all of Bluffton's elementary schools: Pritchardville, M.C. Riley, Bluffton and Red Cedar.

The month-old program now has 23 Bluffton officers matched with 23 students. Each officer is assigned to one student. Each officer will spend time with his or her assigned student each month such as eating lunch with them, helping with homework or attending a school event.

"This is a win-win for both the kids and the department," Brown said. "Children will learn to see officers as caring adults not just authority figures whom some may fear.

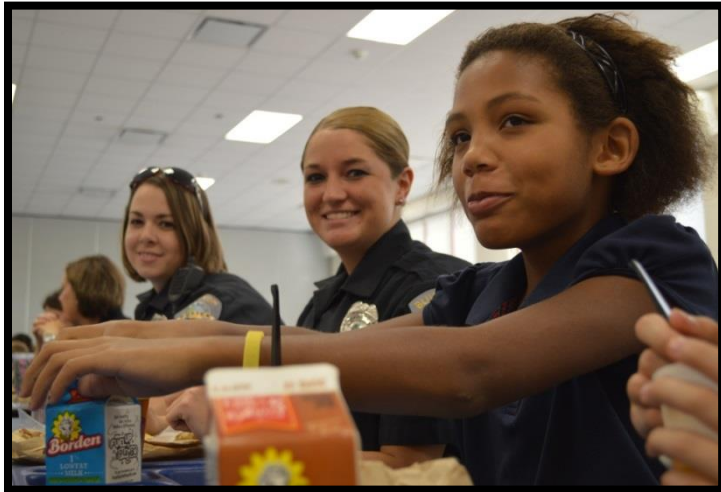
"In a perfect world, we also hope this program will form trusting relationships with these students so they know there is someone in the greater community who cares and is available to them."

Chief Joey Reynolds said this program also has the potential to benefit both the department and students long term.

"Our first priority is to be a positive influence and support for our community's children," Reynolds said. "Relationships which are built at a young age will hopefully continue throughout the years. As these children mature, they may be the ones who alert us to certain situations in the community. In years to come, they may even choose law enforcement as a career.

"It is also a source of pride that Officer Lauren Brown, one of the department's youngest and newest officers, developed and implemented this program and now more than half of the force have volunteered to potentially make a difference in the lives of our youngest residents," Reynolds said.

Mayor Lisa Sulka said community-oriented programs provide a holistic approach to a safer community.



"The more our law enforcement officers reach out to every group of residents, the more we can work together to ensure a safe community," Sulka said. "I am so proud of Bluffton Police Department's leadership with each new program its officers create. Chief Reynolds has provided a culture where his leadership encourages others to be pro-active. The department's programs benefit individuals and also collectively work together for a stronger and safer community."

